

LITTLE YARNS ABOUT FILMS, STARS, PLAYS AND LIFE IN MOVIES

BY JAMES W. DEAN.

NEW YORK, May 13.—The cry for "something different" in the movies seems to have been answered in a photoplay recently completed in the Arctic region. It is called "Nanook of the North."

Nanook, the featured player, is an Eskimo. His wife is the leading lady and the cast is made up of Eskimo women and children.

The picture was filmed by Robert J. Flaherty in the region where existence is a constant battle against the elements, where romance blooms and drama moves despite cold and ever impending starvation.

The native here has a tug-of-war with a walrus and the animal's mate rushes to its rescue.

This picture has not been reviewed by the writer, but its very setting seems to give it merit, for it places the drama of life in a corner of the universe little known to civilized man. It has a stronger flavor of romance than a South Sea Island story or one of desert sands.

IN CHINA.

Constance Talmadge will go to China to film exteriors for "East Is West" when she completes studio scenes in Hollywood. Chinese rivers and cities, including Shanghai, will serve as backgrounds for the story. This will put realism into a story that may lack realism through the casting of Constance Talmadge as "Ming Toy." It is difficult to conceive of one so slim and tall as Constance in a Chinese part. However, one of the worst oriental characterizations I have ever seen was that of Mary Pickford in "Madame Butterfly." And Mary, you know, is quite petite.

AND IN JAPAN.

The real thing in Oriental drama may be seen when films now in production in Japan are imported for exhibition here. The Japanese have made remarkable advances in picture making in the past year. Photographs recently sent me indicate that sets for movies being made in Nippon are on the same lavish scale as those of Griffith or Lubitsch. The stories are native historical dramas.

ARBUCKLE.

An exhibitor at Washington, Ind., who hadn't heard of Will Hays' ban on Arbuckle films, showed "Brewster's Millions" two nights. The crowd was so great that he raised admission prices for the second night. In Birmingham, Wash., an attempt was made to show a Fatty picture, but the public protested so strongly it was withdrawn. The W. C. T. U. of Tulare county, Cal., has forwarded protests to all exhibitors in that county against the showing of Arbuckle films. Hays' action applies only to producers and distributors, as he has no control over exhibitors except through distributors. That means that Arbuckle films may show here and there throughout the country despite the ban.

CUTS AND FLASHES.

The two parts Norma Talmadge plays in "Smilin' Through," make 200 parts she has played since her fourteenth birthday.

Helen Jerome Eddy is to be starred in "A Slice of Life."

Alan Forest will play the heavy role in Shirley Mason's "Lights of the Desert."

Maurice Flynn and Charles Le Moyne will support Charles Jones in "West."

Pat Moore, nephew of Tom Moore, will be in the cast of "Kentucky Days."

Doug Fairbanks has bought the screen rights of "Monsieur Beaucaire."

Pauline Garon will play the ingenue lead in "The Man From Glengarry," to be filmed in Canada.

Marjorie Daw will be leading woman in Owen Moore's next.

If it's a girl it's to be called Norma Constance Talmadge Keaton. If it's a boy it'll be called Joe, after Joseph Schenck, Norma's husband.

"Broken Chains" is to be directed by Allen Holubar.

The quality of acting is not strained by Lon Chaney. "The Trap," which was constructed especially to catch all of his "thousand faces" in one film, is full of lumps.

These lumps need to be worked through a colander of repression. One is always aware Chaney is an actor. He "telegraphs his delivery," as the sport writers say. You know just when he's going to cut the corner with a sneer or split the pan with a tear.

Being set for what's coming, you find little difficulty in getting behind his defense—you realize he is Chaney, an actor, not the participant in a moving melodrama.

Chaney works hard and earnestly to give his role a living fulfillment. He does this by means of one of the most expressive faces on the screen. The effect he strives to achieve is often marred through lack of subtlety, of the delicacy required to retain a slow-changing mood in facial features.

All of this, however, may be construed as damning through faint praise, for Chaney is one of the few actors of the screen who can act with every one of his features. His work in "The Trap" is worth seeing.

"THE TRAP."

"Gaspard the Good," a trapper of the north woods, is betrayed by his sweetheart and robbed of an inherited gold mine by his rival. He becomes a misanthrope planning through seven years to wreak vengeance on his betrayers. They have married and have a son several years old when the mother dies. The father is sent to jail.

Gaspard plans to make the boy pay him back for all the anguish he has borne, but the boy breaks his resolve. Gaspard has come to so love him that

he cannot bear to give him to the father when the latter is released from jail.

He converts his cabin into an immense trap, so arranged that anyone entering the door will lock himself in and at the same time a starving wolf impounded in a pen will be given admission to the cabin. Gaspard expects the father to visit the cabin to find his son.

But vengeance is hoisted by its own petard. The little boy walks into the trap. Gaspard climbs into the wolf pen and thence into the cabin to save the boy. He then gives battle to the wolf and when rescued by the father realizes that his hatred has gained him nothing.

There's a story to beat all the old sex problem pictures. It has the majesty of great hills and sweeping clouds and peaceful waters for a background.

SUBTILES.

A subtitle can go a long way toward making or breaking a picture. I believe the subtitles of "The Trap" are about the most inapt, inappropriate of any connected with the worthwhile film in some months. They are written for the most part in direct quotes in a conglomeration of pidgin-English, burlesque Scandinavian and pseudo-French.

It is possible that some few people in some God-forsaken corner of the universe may talk as this screen character does, but it's not probable. And it is hardly probable that a man soliloquizes in two languages, as this here is credited with doing.

He is shown talking to himself and a subtitle breaks up its English with "tres bien" and "le bon Dieu." When a fellow is soliloquizing, especially if he's working out a plan to get a guy that has wronged him he very probably will soliloquize in the language which presents itself most convenient to his tongue.

Squirrels are the only actors in a series of one-reel comedies made on the famous squirrel farm of Dr. Lillian Delger Powers in Westchester county, N. Y.

"The Little Gray Lady," by Channing Pollock, is to be filmed by John DeLacy.

"Too Much Business" is a revelation of the mimetic art. It translates a humorous magazine story to the screen without losing in the process a drop of the story's juice.

Fortsooth, the story sprouts and blooms when transplanted until it becomes as a refreshing breeze in a theater full of dead plots—a film so removed from the ordinary in treatment of theme and analysis of character that it must take rank as one of the outstanding films of recent months.

The photoplay was adapted from "John Henry and the Restless Sex," a magazine story by Earl Derr Biggers. It is a story characteristic of the newer generation of magazine writers, who for the moment are proving more popular than such young fossils as Peter B. Kyne, Julian Street, Will and Wallace Irvin, Arthur Tappan, Foote, Irvin Cobb and Clarence Buddington Kelland.

"Too Much Business" is a quaint whimsy in which business and romance are all beaded. The idiosyncrasies of the head of a firm are shown.

He is a testy old codger who fires his sales manager because the latter falls in love with his secretary. The young fellow has signed an option on the heart of the young lady to become effective on a certain day provided he has a certain income.

His discharge puts him in a hard way until he conceives the idea of establishing a hotel to care for the children of the most restless of the restless sex, housewives.

His rival, in attempting to crush him, buys off all the nurses and after they walk out he places a diphtheria sign on the door of the Hotel des Enfants. Then the fun begins. It



Elsie Janis and some of her famous gang in a new musical revue, the novelty show of the year, at the Orpheum Wednesday night, May 17

ends when the hero wins the girl and becomes general manager of his old concern after its merger with another firm.

Not much of a story, you may argue. Its worth is in its screen recounting. Take any stenographer you know to see it and she will tell you Tully Marshall is just like her boss and Edward Norton is just like the office manager and Carl Gerard is just like the young fellow who knows the office manager's job better than he does.

She may not recognize herself as the stenographer portrayed by Ethel Gray Terry, but she'll tell you about a girl she knows who is just like her. The credit for the adept handling of this film probably should go to the director, Jess Robbins. He produced the picture "on his own" but he didn't have much trouble in getting Vitaphone to distribute it. It is a credit to the industry.

The Movies are now compensating literature for the film material that the printed page has furnished the screen.

Stories by all of the best known writers of the age except Shaw and Wells have been filmed. Marshall Neilan in a recent statement said he believed the best movies in the next year would derive their theme from the short story.

However, story writers are turning to the movies to find plots. "Merton of the Movies," by Harry Leon Wilson, is probably the most popular magazine story of the past year.

"Linda Lee, Inc.," Louis Joseph Vance's latest novel, is based on life in the Hollywood colony as observed by the author through several years' connection with the movies.

Maurice LeBlanc's latest volume of detective stories, "The Eight Strokes of the Clock," contains a theme of self-hypnosis. A detective in watching a movie senses in the expression of an actor something beyond the business of acting. He deduces that the heroine is in real danger and upon investigation learns that the villain of the play kidnapped her after the photoplay was com-

pleted and carried her off to the location upon which the movie was photographed.

REELOGRAPHS.

Marie Prevost's next will be "They're Off," an auto racing story. She will be supported by Kenneth Harlan and Phila McCullough.

The week's best bid for publicity: Buster Keaton froze an ear at Truckee recently. He returned from Death Valley the other day and the same ear was so sun-burned it had begun to peel.

Irene Fenwick and Helen Ferguson are to support Charles Jones in "West."

Howard Chandler Christy, Charles Dana Gibson, James Montgomery Flagg, Flo Ziegfeld, W. L. George and Mary Roberts Rinehart will pose girls in their idea of beauty for the Selznick news reel.

Marguerite La Motte is to be featured in "The Vengeance of the Deep."

Tom Mix is filming "The Gun Fanner" at Prescott, Ariz.

"The Meat Hunters of Pago Pago" is the attractive title of a Pathe Review dealing with sharks.

"Swing Your Partner" is the next of the one-reel Harold Lloyd comedies to be re-issued.

FILM FLICKERS.

Famous Players denies that Mary Garden was offered \$250,000 to appear in one picture.

Mary Miles Minter has returned from her vacation in Honolulu and will start filming "The Cowboy and the Lady."

Louise Dressler, stage favorite, will appear on the screen in "Burning Sands."

Virginia Brown Faire, leading woman in "Without Benefit of Clergy," will be Guy Bates Post's leading woman in "Omar, the Tent Maker."

"The Silent Call," featuring Strongheart, the dog, has run eight times a day for 11 weeks in Los Angeles, setting an exhibition record for that city.

An interview with Loyd Hamilton, the comedian, is like talking to a representative of a past generation, one who lived in the stone age of the films.

Hamilton has made more than 300 film comedies. The earliest one he can recall was called "Ham, the Piano Mover." It had a notable cast. In the light of present salaries the members of this cast received notable stipends. They were:

Marshall Neilan, director and leading man, \$100 a week.

Ruth Roland, leading woman, \$50.

Seena Owen, character, \$18.

"Ham" Hamilton, \$40.

"Bud" Duncan, \$30.

Victor Fleming, assistant cameraman, \$12.

"I was getting \$5 a day playing as an extra when Neilan offered me \$10 a day, or \$40 a week as a comedian in the 'Ham and Bud' comedies," Hamilton told me. "I took the job on the day rate, worked two days the first week and then told Neilan I'd take the \$40-a-week plan."

In these days a comedy was made in two days. Studio shelves often held 12 comedies, a three-months supply.

A script was written for one of the railroad melodramas that used to feature Helen Holmes. It was delivered by mistake to Hamilton and he made a comedy of it.

In the old days a list of occupations hung in the studio office—baker, butcher, bricklayer, carpenter, chauffeur, plumber, etc. When one comedy was finished the next occupation on the list was taken as the subject.

The things Hamilton told me about

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TWO DAYS ONLY—TODAY AND MONDAY
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date back only nine or ten years. They indicate what progress has been made. Marshall Neilan is now one of the best known directors in the industry. Ruth Roland is perhaps America's best known serial star. Seena Owen is a high-salaried star. Victor Fleming, the \$12-camera cracker, is well known as a director and "Ham, the Piano Mover" is one of the ranking comedians of the screen and is taking a little pleasure trip to Europe.

Hamilton now takes two months to make one comic, whereas he used to make one in two days. Unlike other comedians Hamilton uses no script for his comedies. Only one situation is planned before filming starts. The other "gags" are invented as the production proceeds.

I believe that is the reason Hamilton comedies are of poorer continuity than those of Chaplin, Keaton and Lloyd. On the other hand that is probably the reason they possess a spontaneity of action that lifts them above the ordinary comic film.

The screen version of "The Man From Home" is a drab play against a scintillant background. It is an exposition of the hardware of God, beside which the crude artificers of human puppets pass with bare notice.

If you are able to take your eyes from the beautiful scenery George Fitzmaurice has trapped with the camera, you are aware that one of

those little old plots of the here winning his girl against the odds of a desert land enacted in a ridiculous Far vistas of the Naples, Sorrento and Capri spots thrill and amaze pictorial art that has been equalled on the screen by Bruce scenic.

The play itself is a bit of comedy by James the only one of the castive work except Douglas who fits her vampire role.

But for the greater (film) the unwinding of the audience the flashes of the screen are welcome monotony.

This is another feature which has proved a screen purpose. The success of the various screen Tarzan's "rod."

EDNA PURTANCE. A distributing company films produced by themselves has been organized. Fairbanks, owners of the first of the new production. It is a series of pictures from the beautiful scenery George Fitzmaurice has trapped with the camera, you are aware that one of

ALHAMBRA

IT BEGINS TODAY FOUR DAYS

ALHAMBRA

The Dancing Flame of Paris!



BETTY COMPSON

IN HER NEWEST PICTURE

"THE GREEN TEMPTATION"

Apache underworld and society boudoir linked in this thrilling romance of a dazzling little dancer who became the darling of Paris.

ADDED ATTRACTION

Chester Conklin

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"WEST IS WEST"

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